



Exercise 1.2

Describing the Interface



Describing what the interface is can be a difficult task. The wildland-urban interface means different things to different people. It can be defined in many ways, from a variety of perspectives. This exercise helps participants define the interface from their own perspectives.

Objectives: Participants will be able to do the following:

1. Describe what the interface is for their particular region or area of expertise.
2. Understand the complexity of defining the interface.

Materials:

Flip charts
Paper
Markers
Presentation 1.1

Time: 30 to 45 minutes

1. Explain the purpose of the exercise to the participants:

This exercise will help us to think about how to define the interface based on our own experiences and perspectives. The interface may mean different things to each of us and this exercise helps us to understand these differences.

2. Next, divide the participants into small groups of 3 or 4 people. **Presentation 1.1** has information slides that you can use to introduce this exercise to your participants. Ask each small group to write their responses on a flip chart:

Pretend you are a tour guide and describe the wildland-urban interface for a visitor. What would you see, hear, and smell? What else would you point out?

Note: Be sure to ask participants to think of other elements besides natural resource issues, such as social and economic issues. They can identify positive as well as negative characteristics.

3. Have each small group assign someone to record the responses and another to report back to the whole group.
4. Once the small groups are done describing the interface, have all the groups reconvene and

present their responses. Ask them to notice similarities and differences among responses from different groups or even among different individuals within groups.

5. Use the following questions to facilitate discussion:

- What characterizes the interface here in this region?
- What are the common characteristics described across all the groups?
- What differences have you noted among the groups responses?
- Why do we have differences in how the interface is described within the same region?
- What are some of the unique characteristics in the region that were mentioned?
- What else would other types of people add to these lists – Residents? Small business owners? Elected leaders? Large landowners?
- How do you think different perceptions of the interface might influence how interface issues are prioritized or addressed? Give examples.

Optional: Ask each group (or individual) to graphically present the WUI in their regions by drawing some of the characteristics that they have discussed.

Optional: The list of interface characteristics that participants come up with in this exercise can be used in the ranking exercise outlined in **Exercise 1.3: Prioritizing Interface Issues**.

Summary

The term “wildland-urban interface” often conjures up images of a sharply defined line delineating the boundary between developed and undeveloped lands. It is also commonly thought of as those areas where development occurs within forests, a place where built structures intermix with natural areas. This exercise can help training participants to see the diversity of definitions and characteristics that make up the wildland-urban interface and to think about not so much *where* the interface is located but *how* interface issues affect their ability to manage and conserve natural resources.